



**Re: S.B. No. 196 AN ACT PROHIBITING INVOLUNTARY DISCHARGES FROM NURSING HOMES AND RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES TO TEMPORARY OR UNSTABLE HOUSING**

Testimony of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Connecticut  
By Thomas Burr  
Human Services Committee  
March 1, 2022

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Human Services Committee; my name is Thomas Burr, from Glastonbury CT, and I am the Community and Affiliates Relations Manager of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Connecticut). I am testifying today regarding support for S.B. No. 196 AN ACT PROHIBITING INVOLUNTARY DISCHARGES FROM NURSING HOMES AND RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES TO TEMPORARY OR UNSTABLE HOUSING.

NAMI is dedicated to building better lives for those with lived experience with mental health illness and their families. NAMI Connecticut and its nine local affiliates provide support groups and educational programs for people with mental health conditions and their loved ones and advocates for policies to improve the lives of people affected by mental health conditions.

As you already know, COVID-19 has had, and continues to have a serious impact on the overall mental health of people in Connecticut. The pandemic highlighted the existing mental health crisis in the state and around the country. As a staff member of NAMI Connecticut, I care about mental health for all. We have seen our call volume double during the pandemic and the demand for our online support groups and education programs continues to increase.

The Connecticut nonprofit service provider community, including NAMI Connecticut and the organizations where NAMI refers people with mental health issues and their loved ones for help, struggle to meet the demand for services after years of cuts and austerity. The time to re-invest is NOW!

In regard to SB 196, as someone who has literally hosted over a hundred NAMI Family Support Groups in the past 2 years, I have heard too many stories of individuals who are due to be transitioned out a medical or nursing home facility, whose families cannot accept them, only to be informed by the facility staff that if the family does NOT take them in, the facility will transport the person to the local homeless shelter. This situation leaves the family member with an impossible choice, accept someone into their homes they are incapable of providing care for (usually due to the complexity of their illness), or consent to their loved one being placed in a homeless shelter, or even at times, literally discharged to the street. If you have never been faced with this situation, you cannot imagine how stressful, gut-wrenching and terrifying it is to be faced with such a choice. As a society, we can and must do better.



Thankfully, it appears that the State of Connecticut, after finding itself in a mental health crisis, is prepared to do better. During the public hearings last week of both the Appropriations Committee and the joint Children and Public Health Committee's, NAMI Connecticut, along with many other individual, providers, and advocates, and at the request of these Committees, detailed the items needed, above and beyond the items included in the Governors proposed budget (HP 5037), and the Children's Omnibus Mental Health Bill (HB 5001). Please refer to my written testimony from these hearings if you would like the details of what NAMI Connecticut is proposing:

HB 5037: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/appdata/tmy/2022HB-05037-R000224-Burr,%20Thomas,%20Community%20and%20Affiliates%20Relations%20Manager-CT%20Chapter%20of%20NAMI-DMHAS-TMY.PDF>

HB 5001: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/phdata/tmy/2022HB-05001-R000225-Burr,%20Thomas,%20CAR%20Manager-NAMI%20Connecticut-TMY.PDF>

In essence, having a fully funded and integrated, coordinated mental health system in Connecticut will prevent discharge vulnerable people into a homeless shelter. Until that day, we must declare loudly and publicly that this practice cannot stand, thus I again urge you to pass SB 196.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully

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